

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent from this Chamber today. I would like the RECORD to show that, had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall votes 58, 59, and 60.

REAUTHORIZE SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION ACT

(Mr. WALDEN of Oregon asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, the failure of Congress to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act is a breach of faith to more than 600 forested counties and 4,400 school districts across America.

Mr. Speaker, 78 percent of the land in Deschutes County, Oregon, is controlled by the Federal Government. It is a recreational and outdoor paradise. Funds from this program have supported public safety, emergency medical, search and rescue operations, and much more to protect the more than 2 million people who come to central Oregon to recreate every year.

County Sheriff Les Stiles says, "Search and rescue is a matter of life and death in central Oregon, and supporting these programs is essential given the surge in outdoor recreation."

Our school kids are hurt, too, because this program has not been reauthorized yet. At the Bend-LaPine School District, administrators face the task of bigger class sizes or fewer teachers as they struggle to meet State and Federal mandates. School Superintendent Doug Nelson says, "These funds help us ensure programs which don't leave kids behind."

Mr. Speaker, Congress must keep the Federal Government's word to timber communities. Pass H.R. 17. Time is running out.

REAUTHORIZE SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION ACT

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I too rise on the issue of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act. As my colleague from Oregon just stated, this is a crisis. This is an economic, social and public safety crisis if these funds are not reauthorized. They are now preparing layoff notices for teachers in rural school districts, for deputy sheriffs in search and rescue, for people who maintain our critical road and highway infrastructure in the western and other States across the country.

This Congress must act, and soon, to keep faith with the counties and the school districts where the Federal Gov-

ernment owns a preponderance of the land and has changed forest policies and has dropped their revenues dramatically.

MEMBERS NOT ABOVE THE LAW

(Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, Americans are fed up with elected officials acting like they are better than everyone else. We have seen scandal after scandal on a bipartisan basis, and people are sick of it.

Just last year, in the face of several inappropriate acts from Members of this Congress, some of our leaders decided that we were above the law. I cannot disagree more. When a local business fails to file its taxes, we investigate. When a parent abuses a child, we investigate. If a Member of Congress abuses his or her position, law enforcement officers must have the authority to follow the evidence regardless of where it may lead.

Listen up America. Last week I introduced H.R. 88 that declares to our constituents that we agree with them: Members of Congress should not be above the law. I urge my colleagues to cosponsor this important legislation.

CHANGE POLICY IN IRAQ

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that all of us want what is best for the men and women on the front lines in Iraq. Certainly it is disturbing when we find that there is a confusion in the reporting of the incident that saw the loss of life of approximately four or five of our soldiers. First, it was represented that they died in a battle fighting against the insurgents and others; later to be determined that they had been kidnapped and shot in the head execution-style.

This, of course, speaks to the failed policy of this administration that our soldiers can declare victory and be returned home, but more importantly it certainly is a shame when we cannot tell parents and loved ones and others how their loved ones fell in battle.

Certainly it is a shame that we find that our young men and women on the front lines may be subject to capture and execution, like being shot in the streets in a most disgraceful manner.

We must fix the broken policies of Iraq. Redeploy our troops, engage our allies in the region, begin a political diplomatic solution, and stop falsifying reports to the American people, not knowing how their loved ones are being executed in the streets of Iraq. I ask for a new policy in Iraq.

PROTESTING IS ACT OF PATRIOTISM

(Mr. COHEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, this weekend tens or hundreds of thousands of Americans came to Washington to protest the war. It was reminiscent of Vietnam, as so much of this war is reminiscent of Vietnam.

What these people did was an act of patriotism and courage, exercising their first amendment rights and expressing their opinion that the policy of this administration and this country is wrong. As they protested, and throughout the weekend, American soldiers lost their lives. It is unfortunate that it seems that the calls of the people are not being heeded.

It is particularly distressing, Mr. Speaker, to hear one of the Cabinet members suggest that people who disagree with the administration are lending aid and solace to the enemy. That is wrong. The first amendment is about free speech. The demonstrations, the protests that happened this week were correct. Samuel Johnson said: "The last refuge to which a scoundrel clings is patriotism." I think we saw people try to find patriotism to be the refuge rather than response to protests and analytical discussions of the policies in Iraq.

FATHER ROBERT DRINAN

(Mr. MCGOVERN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, Father Robert Drinan, a former Member of this House and a champion for the cause of peace and justice, died yesterday.

Father Drinan was a hero and a friend. He recognized early the folly of the Vietnam War, and he fought to end it. He was a critic of the current and senseless war in Iraq. He was outspoken and not faint on issues of human rights here at home and around the world. He was a friend to the poor, a courageous advocate for civil rights and civil liberties, and a well-respected legal scholar. He was also a Jesuit priest who was proud of his vocation and dedicated to the teachings of the Church.

We developed a strong friendship over the years. I certainly sought his advice and counsel on many, many issues; and he never hesitated to provide it. He called regularly, sent me articles and speeches, and always urged me to stand strong for what is right.

Mr. Speaker, our country, and indeed the world, is better off because of Bob Drinan. My condolences go out to his family and friends. He was a remarkable man and a true inspiration and he will be missed.